

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 5021

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: PINT, TU
SUBJ: POLITICAL TRENDS ANALYSIS: TURKISH POLITICS HEADS INTO
SUMMER SLUMP.

1. TURKISH POLITICAL ACTIVITY APPEARS TO BE GOING INTO A
SUMMER SLUMP DESPITE PRESSING DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN PROBLEMS.
WHILE THE FINANCE MINISTRY REMAINS SEIZED WITH CRITICAL
NEGOTIATIONS RELATING TO TURKEY'S DESPERATE BALANCE OF
PAYMENTS SITUATION, OFFICIALS OF MOST OTHER MINISTRIES ARE
SCATTERING TO THE SEASHORE TO TRY TO SQUEEZE AS MUCH
VACATION AS POSSIBLE INTO THE TIME REMAINING BEFORE THE
BEGINNING OF RAMAZAN AUGUST 6. THE PARLIAMENT ADJOURNED
JULY 3 AND THE POLITICIANS WILL NOT RETURN IN FORCE, UNLESS
CALLED INTO SPECIAL SESSION, UNTIL NOVEMBER. INTERNATIONALLY,
THE FOCUS OF ATTENTION HERE IS ON THE AMERICAN CONGRESS,
WHILE INTERNALLY THE CONTINUED STABILITY OF THE ECEVIT GOVERNMENT
SEEMS LIKELY TO BE DETERMINED LARGELY BY ITS SUCCESS
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IN BRINGING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE UNDER CONTROL.

2. ECEVIT IS BACK IN THE COUNTRY FOR THE FIRST SUSTAINED
PERIOD SINCE TAKING OFFICE LAST JANUARY IN WHICH HE CAN
GIVE PRIORITY ATTENTION TO DOMESTIC ISSUES. THROUGH PERSONAL
DIPLOMACY, HE HAS SUCCEEDED IN PUTTING HIS OWN STAMP ON
TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH THE MAJOR POWERS AND WESTERN

EUROPE. HE HAS LARGELY SUCCEEDED IN PROJECTING AN IMAGE DOMESTICALLY OF A SOPHISTICATED STATESMAN AND STRONG DEFENDER OF TURKISH NATIONAL INTERESTS. IN THE PROCESS, HE HAS APPARENTLY CONVINCED MOST TURKS THAT THE NEXT MOVES ARE UP TO THE WEST, AND THAT THE US AND EUROPE MUST DO MUCH MORE OVER THE COMING MONTHS TO ACCOMMODATE TURKISH INTERESTS IN REGARD TO NATO, ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND MILITARY PREPAREDNESS. HAVING SCORED HEAVILY, IN TURKISH EYES, IN THE DIPLOMATIC BIG LEAGUES ECEVIT IS NOW SENDING HIS FOREIGN MINISTER ON A ROUND OF THE MAJOR NON-ALIGNED CAPITALS, PRESUMABLY TO EMPHASIZE HIS GOVERNMENT'S NEW COMMITMENT TO "MULTILATERAL" DIPLOMACY. FONMIN OKCUN WILL VISIT INDIA JULY 10-14 AND, FOR BALANCE, MAY ALSO STOP OFF IN ISLAMABAD. WE UNDERSTAND THAT LATER IN THE MONTH HE MAY VISIT ALGIERS AND BELGRADE.

3. REGIONAL RELATIONS SEEM LIKELY TO REMAIN IN SUSPENSE UNTIL SEPTEMBER FOLLOWING THE SURPRISINGLY HOPEFUL, THOUGH NON-COMMITTAL, MEETING OF THE GREEK AND TURKISH SECGENS THIS WEEK. THE CYPRUS ISSUE, OF COURSE, HAS ITS OWN INTERNAL LOGIC AND ANY BASIC MOVEMENT AWAITS A CONGRESSIONAL DECISION ON THE EMBARGO. MINSTATE HIKMET CETIN HAS JUST BEEN IN IRAN WHERE HE APPARENTLY SUCCEEDED IN GETTING EMERGENCY HELP WITH TURKEY'S CRITICAL OIL IMPORT SQUEEZE; SIMILAR EFFORTS WITH OTHER REGIONAL OIL POWERS SEEM LIKELY.

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4. DOMESTICALLY, THE NUMBER ONE PRE-OCCUPATION CONTINUES TO BE TERRORISM AND URBAN VIOLENCE. NORMALLY ONE WOULD EXPECT THE SUMMER HEAT AND SCHOOL VACATIONS TO BRING A LULL, BUT IN RECENT WEEKS THE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE HAS SEEMED ACTUALLY TO BE RISING (ANKARA 4919). PRIVATELY, GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS ARE GIVING ECEVIT UNTIL NOVEMBER OR DECEMBER TO SHOW RESULTS ON THE TERRORISM FRONT, BUT THE RECORD SO FAR IS A CONSIDERABLE, THOUGH BEARABLE, EMBARRASSMENT. NATIONALIST ACTION PARTY CHAIRMAN TURKES HAS TALKED OF CALLING FOR A SPECIAL SESSION TO FORCE A VOTE OF NO-CONFIDENCE, BUT SHORT OF A MAJOR DISASTER OR BLUNDER ON ECEVIT'S PART, WE DOUBT HE WOULD RISK THE EMBARRASSMENT OF A LIKELY FAILURE. THE JUSTICE PARTY IS IN TURMOIL AS DEMIREL'S MANY CRITICS SEARCH FOR SOME WAY TO FORCE HIM FROM THE CHAIRMANSHIP AT THEIR NOVEMBER CONVENTION. WITHOUT A UNITED JUSTICE PARTY -- OR NEW ELECTIONS -- THERE IS NO CREDIBLE ALTERNATIVE TO ECEVIT, AND WE EXPECT HE WILL HAVE A RELATIVELY FREE HAND FOR AT LEAST SEVERAL MORE MONTHS TO DEAL WITH THE ACCUMULATED PROBLEMS OF THE LAST FOUR YEARS.

5. PRESIDENT KORUTURK'S HEALTH REMAINS SUFFICIENTLY FRAGILE THAT SOME TURKS ARE SPECULATING THAT A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

COULD BE FORCED ON THE COUNTRY AT SOME POINT IN THE NEAR
FUTURE. HE LEFT ON VACATION EARLIER IN THE WEEK, HOWEVER,
AMID REPORTS THAT HE HAD GAINED SOME WEIGHT AND STRENGTH AFTER
AN EXTENDED ILLNESS WHICH HAD CAUSED POSTPONEMENT OF STATE
VISITS SCHEDULED LAST MONTH TO ROMANIA AND BULGARIA. MEANWHILE,
KORUTURK IS EXPECTED SHORTLY TO ANNOUNCE REPLACEMENTS FOR FIVE
PRESIDENTIALLY-APPOINTED SENATORS WHO TERMS EXPIRE JULY 3.
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